

WRITING STRATEGIES STRAND

4

IF YOU KNOW SOME EFFECTIVE WRITING STRATEGIES, YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR OWN WRITING. YOU ALSO CAN HELP YOUR CLASSMATES IMPROVE THEIR WRITING WHEN YOU WORK IN PAIRS AND DO PEER RESPONSES.

THE CAHSEE WILL TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF FIVE WRITING STRATEGIES STANDARDS. THEY ARE:

- ws 1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing. [3 questions]
- ws 1.2 Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, and the active rather than the passive voice. [3 questions]
- ws 1.4 Develop the main ideas within the body of the composition through supporting evidence (e.g., scenarios, commonly held beliefs, hypotheses, definitions). [2 questions]
- ws 1.5 Synthesize information from multiple sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information and the different perspectives found in each medium (e.g., almanacs, microfiche, news sources, in-depth field studies, speeches, journals, technical documents). [1 question]
- ws 1.9 Revise writing to improve the logic and coherence of the organization and controlling perspective, the precision of word choice, and the tone by taking into consideration the audience, purpose, and formality of the context. [3 questions]

THE CAHSEE USES 12 MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS TO TEST THESE STANDARDS. IN THIS SECTION, YOU DO NOT WRITE ANY ESSAYS, BUT YOU ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT WRITING. MOST OF THE QUESTIONS ASK YOU TO BE AN “EDITOR”—TO FIND AND CORRECT ERRORS, TO CHOOSE BETTER WORDS AND PHRASES. REMEMBER AS YOU WRITE TO STAY AWARE OF YOUR AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE. DOING SO IS WHAT HELPS GOOD WRITERS KEEP THEIR ESSAYS CLEAR, COHERENT, AND FOCUSED. GOOD ESSAYS NOT ONLY HAVE STRONG BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS BUT ALSO INCLUDE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE. LET’S SEE HOW YOU DO ON THE FIVE QUESTIONS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER.

FINDING AND CORRECTING ERRORS

Read the following article draft, which appeared previously on the CAHSEE, and answer the questions that follow it.

Essay Writing

(1) To begin an essay, a student should have some knowledge of the topic or be willing to search out information. (2) Then one must focus clearly on the prompt, addressing all its major points, and making sure that the central purpose is evident throughout the entire essay. (3) Interesting and convincing examples with lots of specific details are always helpful. (4) The details must show some kind of clear arrangement—chronological, spatial, or order-of-importance. (5) A student writer will also want to revise a first draft so that any errors in grammar and mechanics can be got rid of. (6) Steps can be taken to edit essays. (7) Relying solely on “SpellCheck” can be risky; (8) It does not catch the common errors that students make, such as confusing “your” and “you’re.” (9) If students meet all these requirements, then they will have written very effectively.



L0198001

Released CAHSEE question

Which of the following sentences, if inserted before sentence 1, would make the MOST effective opening sentence?

- A. Writing an essay is easy if one uses a computer.
- B. Good essays are always written in black pen.
- C. Any student can write a successful essay.
- D. Teachers sometimes assign difficult essays.

Solution

If you read the essay, you should know what it is about. It's a "how-to" list of things to do in order to write a successful essay. So look at the choices in the question. You can eliminate A and B because nowhere in the essay does the author mention any tools needed to write—not a computer or a pen. The writer does mention "SpellCheck," but it's not the focus. Look at D. Nowhere in this essay is the word "teacher" mentioned. The correct answer is C. The essay says that any student can write a successful essay. (WS 10.1.1)

L0198004

Released CAHSEE question**Which is the MOST effective substitution for the underlined part of sentence 5?**

- A. and ridding of errors in grammar and mechanics.
- B. to get rid of errors in grammar and mechanics.
- C. and getting rid of errors in grammar and mechanics.
- D. Leave as is.

Solution

This question asks you to find a better way to write a certain line. The words “can be got rid of” are awkward so we don’t want to leave it as is. Look at the other choices. Try them. When you are taking the test, you won’t be able to say the choices out loud, but you can read them slowly and carefully to see if they make sense. Answers A and C use the “ing” form of the verb, the participle. The conjunction “and” connects two things in grammar that are alike and that have equal value. For example, you can’t correctly connect “walk” and “running.” “I walk and running down the street” simply doesn’t sound right. Instead, you would say, “I walk and run down the street.” So you cannot connect “revise” and “ridding” or “getting.” You could say “revise and get rid of” but that is not one of your choices. The correct answer is **B**. (WS 10.1.9)



CHOOSING BETTER WORDS AND PHRASES

Now read “The Abominable Snowman.” After you read it, look at the questions which appeared on a previous CAHSEE.

The Abominable Snowman

(1) The Abominable Snowman is a hairy, apelike thing that is said to live in the Himalayan Mountains of Nepal. (2) Natives of this region have believed in the existence of this beast for many centuries. (3) However, since no one has ever found a Yeti (the Nepalese name for the Abominable Snowman), doubts still remain.

(4) Some people who believe in the Yeti point to the discovery of peculiar footprints found above the snowline of the Himalayas. (5) There were footprints left by animals, and some people think that they were very much like human footprints but that they must have been made by animals which were much heavier and larger than humans.

(6) Scientists who have studied the footprints, however, agree that they were most likely left by bears. (7) “Bears are quite capable of walking on their two hind legs,” says zoologist Hans Miller. (8) “This also explains many supposed Yeti sightings.

(9) At a distance, a bear walking in such a way could easily appear to be a creature of human form. (10) In fact, three of the five Yeti sightings last year were determined to be bears. (11) The others remain unexplained.” (12) Nonetheless, many people remain convinced that the Yeti is real. (13) “There has to,” says Raju, a mountain guide, “be something out there. (14) There have been too many sightings for this all to be the product of overactive imaginations.” (15) And, yet, it seems that the world will not be convinced of the existence of the Yeti until it is confirmed by hard evidence, a live specimen, or at least a skeleton. (16) For now, it appears that the Yeti will continue to inhabit the shadowy region between legend and reality.

Has your teacher ever given you a list of overused words you should try to avoid—words such as *very* and *thing* and *stuff*? Sometimes even trained writers find that such words have “sneaked” into their work. Let’s look at the first line of “Snowman”—which word might be the best one from the following list to use in place of *thing*?

L0176001

Released CAHSEE question

Which of the following words is the BEST way to express the meaning of the word *thing* in sentence 1?

- A. object
- B. item
- C. creature
- D. article

Solution

Is the Abominable Snowman an object? Is it an item? Is it a creature? Is it an article? It’s a creature. Even if you have never heard of the Abominable Snowman, you can figure out from reading the article that whatever “it” is, it must be a creature. It has footprints. It looks like a human. It moves. So the BEST choice is: C. (WS 10.1.2)



Let’s look at the next question.

Released CAHSEE question

Which of the following ideas is supported by details or evidence in the essay?

- A. The world will never believe in the existence of the Yeti.
- B. Yeti sightings cannot be explained by overactive imaginations.
- C. A bear walking on its hind legs can appear to be a Yeti.
- D. All mountain guides believe in the Yeti.

Solution

Which of the following ideas is supported by details or evidence in the essay?

Sentence 6 says that scientists who have studied the footprints agree that they were most likely left by bears. Sentences 7, 8, 9, and 10 support this: bears walk on their two hind legs; bears walking on two hind legs from a distance could look like a human creature; some sightings have already been proven to be bears. The answer is **C**. (WS 10.1.4)



L0176003

Released CAHSEE question

Based on the essay, which of the following would be the **BEST** source of information to demonstrate that the Yeti most likely does **NOT** exist?

- A. a book of Nepalese legends which contains stories about the Yeti
- B. a documentary about the Yeti containing interviews with Yeti believers
- C. a poster which has pictures of all known Himalayan mammals
- D. a magazine article which demonstrates the falsehood of all supposed Yeti sightings

Solution

If you want to find a source to prove that the Abominable Snowman does **NOT** exist, you won't find it in Nepalese legends, you won't find proof from people who believe that the Yeti exists, and you won't find it on a poster of pictures of all known Himalayan mammals. The answer is **D**, because an article demonstrating the falsehood of all Yeti sightings is the most scientific source. (WS 10.1.5)